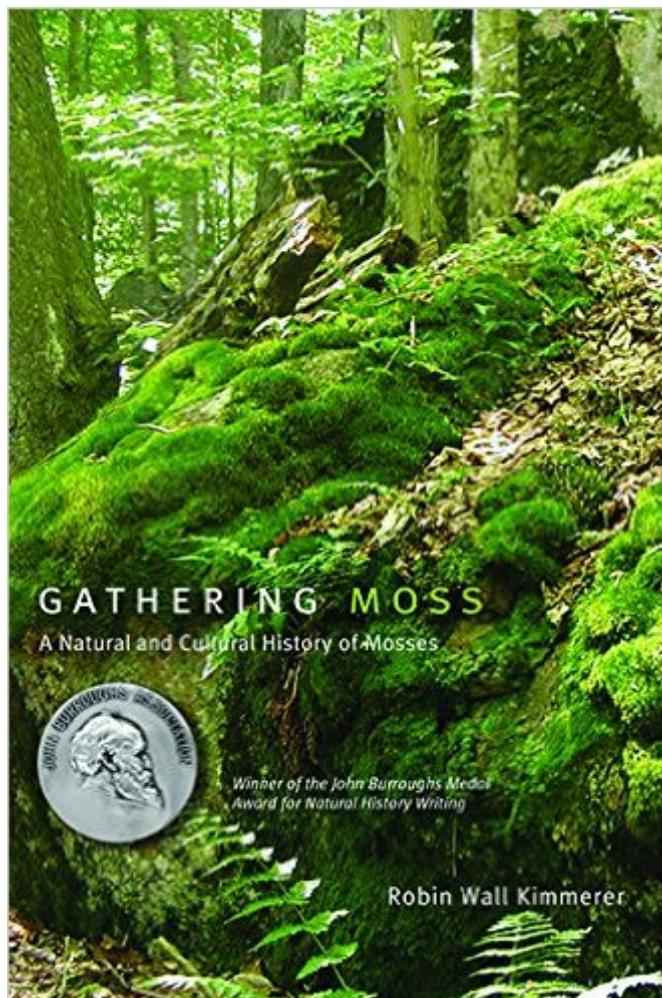


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# Gathering Moss: A Natural And Cultural History Of Mosses



## Synopsis

Living at the limits of our ordinary perception, mosses are a common but largely unnoticed element of the natural world. Gathering Moss is a beautifully written mix of science and personal reflection that invites readers to explore and learn from the elegantly simple lives of mosses. Robin Wall Kimmerer's book is not an identification guide, nor is it a scientific treatise. Rather, it is a series of linked personal essays that will lead general readers and scientists alike to an understanding of how mosses live and how their lives are intertwined with the lives of countless other beings, from salmon and hummingbirds to redwoods and rednecks. Kimmerer clearly and artfully explains the biology of mosses, while at the same time reflecting on what these fascinating organisms have to teach us. Drawing on her diverse experiences as a scientist, mother, teacher, and writer of Native American heritage, Kimmerer explains the stories of mosses in scientific terms as well as in the framework of indigenous ways of knowing. In her book, the natural history and cultural relationships of mosses become a powerful metaphor for ways of living in the world. Gathering Moss will appeal to a wide range of readers, from bryologists to those interested in natural history and the environment, Native Americans, and contemporary nature and science writing.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I purchased a copy of this book after hearing the author read a short passage on NPR. I was fascinated with her prose but did not expect a book, written by a biologist about an obscure topic of limited interest to a lay person, to be a compelling page turner. I read the first chapter and was hooked, devouring the remaining pages in two sittings. I immediately ordered two additional copies

as Christmas gifts. Ms Kimmerer is an entertaining story teller in the finest tradition of indigenous peoples in addition to her many talents as a professional biologist, ecologist and expert bryologist. I especially recommend this book to those who may think they know everything they wish to about mosses, for there is something for all readers here.

I bought this book because the author was coming to the environmental center I volunteer for. It is a wonderful book and the woman who wrote it is so deserving of our respect and praise. To quote someone who says it all, Janisse Ray said "something I took for granted has come alive, because I have been given its story. After reading this book, I took a magnifying glass outside and pored over the tree trunks. I have seen Robin Kimmerer's miniature landscape for myself. Yet, this is so much more than a book about mosses. This is a Native American woman speaking. This is a mother's story. This is a science revealed through human psyche. Robin Kimmerer is a scientist who combines empiricism with all other forms of knowing. Hers is a spectacularly different view of the world and her voice needs to be heard."I heartily recommend this book.

Science writers have a responsibility to educate the public so that people will act to save what's left of the web of life. Few carry out their task with such effectiveness as Robin Wall Kimmerer has done in *Gathering Moss*. Well-chosen similes and analogies animate her stories, and well-drawn parallels to other areas of science broaden their appeal. I'm recommending this book to all of my friends, especially those who haven't yet discovered the wonders to be found in wandering around in forests.

I've never purchased one of those books suggests when you're buying other books. But I'm glad I bought this one. Kimmerer is a scientist, a poet, a mother, a Native American and all these strands are blended in this remarkable book about her passion: bryophytes. Each chapter is a story that not only introduces fascinating information about these tiny but ubiquitous plants, but makes the entry into their world easy for a non-bryologist, AND leads to deep reflection about life. I found myself reading the book slowly, savoring and reflecting on each chapter. I plan to read it again before the year is out.

For an artist, Kimmerer's writing brings a resonance of life to science. She crosses the ideological barrier between the two cultures of human interpretation in ways few scientists can. Stephen J Gould, EO Wilson, David Bohn, Carl Sagan, and many other scientists and written awe-inspiring

interpretations of the wonderfully complex relationship between human understanding and some of the more simple forms of nature; but Robin Wall Kimmerer may well have written this beautifully poetic book more to help scientists to see their linear research from a deeper more human level. Annie Dillard's "Pilgrim at Tinker's Creek" comes to mind as one of the few other successful books of this genera. To me, "Gathering Moss" rates as a fascinating counter-point to Dillard's writing. Kimmerer is a scientist, native American, and mother who balances all roles with the ease the good art appears to have. While I have waxed on about the two cultures, this book is written for everyone who cares about life and nature,

Since, I've been recommending this book to all my friends with botanical interests ever since I read it two months ago, I might as well try to sing its praises to a broader public. I found it to be a book of a different order from most other nature books I've read. I'm not talking about comparative rankings here, though there is much to praise, but about its uniqueness. The only book in my acquaintance that I'm tempted to compare it to (though with a deeply respectful nod to the books of Lewis Thomas) is Aldo Leopold's "A Sand County Almanac". Both Leopold and Kimmerer have created essays with seemingly effortless grace and formal purpose, and both leave the reader with an enduring impression of someone writing who is, first and foremost, not a writer or a scientist or an environmental moralist, but, plainly and sincerely, a human being living and learning from and cherishing earth's nonhuman creatures insofar as possible on their own terms. We are most and best human when living in such caring wonder.

Gathering Moss is a wonderful collection of essays written from the heart of a indigenous writer. I truly enjoyed reading the book. The essays relate life experiences of the author (a Mom and professor of botany). These stories are skillfully woven together with humor, scientific knowledge and the spiritual experience of being in the woods. The descriptions of the landscape and plants bring me back to the Adirondack mountains...you can almost smell the balsam and feel the cool dampness of the mosses. I highly recommend this book!

This book is a philosophy treatise in disguise. Beware all who enter here! You'll not only get a knowledge of mosses and lichens, but a lot more! I couldn't put it down! Thanks, RWK!

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